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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on research in student self-evaluation processes. Student self-evaluation requires judgment of the "worth" of one s performance and the identification of strengths and weaknesses with a view to improving learning outcomes. Research was conducted at three sites: an Australian country secondary school; a suburban London (England) further education college; and an inner city high school in London. The study identified two broad types of student self-evaluation processes. The informal processes were integrated into the teaching and learning practice quickly, verbally, and pragmatically. The formal processes were more paper-based with a tangible outcome that was used for evaluating the student s progress. Analysis of both types of self-evaluation identified several elements: use of criteria, teacher-student interactive dialogue, and ascription of a grade. In order for student self-evaluation to take root and flourish, the following supporting factors were found necessary: pedagogical change, a shared value system between students and teachers, and a school-wide evaluation ethic. The constraints on student self-evaluation were lack of time, the paucity of professional development and support for student self-evaluation, and the change process itself. The intended learning outcomes for students included: independence in their learning, responsibility for decision making related to assignments, proactivity, and creativity in taking charge of their own work. The findings of the research indicated that despite the constraints mentioned, where student self-evaluation was implemented and supported, it was possible to see an empowering impact on students. (Contains 11 references.) (ND)

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STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION PROCESSES: EMPOWERING STUDENTS IN LEARNER-CENTRED CONTEXTS

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STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION PROCESSES:
EMPOWERING STUDENTS IN LEARNER-CENTRED CONTEXTS

Introduction

This paper is based on research, conducted over the past two years, in student self-evaluation processes. The research investigates student self-evaluation, as a component of learner-centred pedagogy, in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the processes involved. Questions of how students go about self-evaluating their experiences of learning and teaching, and how teachers attempt or succeed in integrating experiences of this type of evaluation into their teaching practice, are explored (Klenowski, 1995). The conditions under which these processes are promoted and the constraints that exist in their implementation are the focus of this paper.

Impetus for such research stems from a lack of theory on feedback and formative evaluation in the classroom (Sadler, 1989; Stiggins, 1992; Gipps, 1994). It also derives from the perceived potential of the involvement of students in the evaluation process as a means to improved learning outcomes (Zessoules & Gardner, 1991; Gipps, 1994). Student self-evaluation, as a component of learner-centred pedagogy, shifts the evaluative focus to learning itself, and the supportive processes associated with it, rather than focusing simply on the measurement of that learning.

The research outcomes contribute knowledge about the purposes of formative evaluation procedures and their links with learning. The potential exists for student self-evaluation to harness student ownership and control of their own work, influence the strategies they use in learning, and impact on their confidence, and thus the quality of the learning they achieve. This paper provides a rationale for sustaining current efforts to transform assessment and evaluation practices, and the implications of this, for pedagogy.

Definitions

Student self-evaluation is a formative process leading to self-development. It is a process of identifying the value of the teaching and learning experience for the individual student. In this research I am attempting to bring a broader understanding of evaluation (critically examining the values underlying the program) to students assessing their learning.

For the purposes of this paper I am using the term evaluation throughout when I am talking about student achievement of performance. The context in Britain, in which the majority of the research took place, was not one that was propitious to exploring evaluation in the broader sense. I had to explore student self-evaluation in the context of self-assessment. The characteristics of student self-evaluation as used in this paper include:

- a broader understanding than self-assessment;
- a process of ascribing value to the teaching and learning experience;
- evaluation against identified criteria and
- formative evaluation of teaching and learning outlining the implications for future action.

In the classroom context student self-evaluation is a developmental process that is supported and managed together with the teacher and the student's peers. Students engage in more than just deciding what grade they should get. Students evaluate their performance against identified criteria (either self-identified or identified in collaboration with teacher and peers, or given) and measure progress against targets that are self-selected or negotiated with the teacher. Student self-evaluation requires judgement of 'the worth' of one's performance and the identification of one's strengths and weaknesses with a view to improving one's learning outcomes. The term student self-evaluation is used to emphasise that it is the students themselves who are conducting the evaluation. The process involves human judgement and interactive dialogue between student and teacher to ensure full analysis. A teacher can, in this way, acquire an insight into the student's understanding by checking out if the student's answer really means what it appears to mean.

Context

The nineties have witnessed the emergence of a paradigm shift in the methods for evaluating student achievement and performance. Broadfoot (1993) indicates that in this new paradigm "... it is learning itself, rather than simply the measurement of that learning, which is its central purpose" (p. 3). The range of methods for evaluation includes, portfolio and authentic assessments, which incorporate: exhibitions of learning; oral; practical; performances; individual or group presentations; essay examinations; research projects and scientific experiments. The advent of these forms of evaluation for student attainment has paralleled the demand for students to develop skills such as: working in teams; collecting, analysing and organising information; communicating ideas and information; planning and organising activities; using

mathematical ideas and techniques and using technology[1]. Gipps (1994) indicates clearly that different forms of evaluation impact on teaching and thereby encourage different styles of learning. The shift in evaluation to support learning and to empower students I would contend needs to have a stronger emphasis for the remainder of this decade.

Broadfoot (1988) and Gipps (1990) highlight the significance of the educational and formative uses of evaluation, and advocate systems that acknowledge this importance and give teachers a key professional role. This research was conducted in classrooms to examine closely the extent to which students are provided with opportunities and skills of self-evaluation for formative purposes. Student self-evaluation is integral to the learning process. It was evident in the learner-centred contexts studied where students were encouraged to take increased responsibility for their learning. This was achieved by students planning, organising, evaluating, and implementing strategies to improve their own learning. In a teacher-centred context these elements of the learning process are controlled by the teacher. The teacher's role remains vital in the learner-centred context because they are responsible for developing a structured learning environment where students are given support and guidance to attain skills in self-evaluation and independence in their learning.

The value of student self-evaluation in the learning process is best understood where students learn to evaluate and monitor their own performance in relation to identified criteria or standards. External assessments that compare and categorise student performances and present information about students in a packaged and labelled form can limit, rather than facilitate, student learning. Sadler (1989) has stated "all methods of grading which emphasise rankings or comparisons among students are irrelevant for formative purposes" (p. 127). Stiggins (1992) also states that evaluation for formative purposes has quite different qualities from that used for summative purposes.

A key element in the formative evaluation process is feedback that can be defined as "information about how successfully something has been or is being done" (Sadler, 1989, p. 120). Sadler refers to Ramaprasad's (1983) definition of feedback that emphasises its effect, rather than its informational content. Feedback is information that "... *is used to alter the gap* " (p. 121). For example, if information is recorded as a summary grade then this feedback is not particularly effective because it may not

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1 These are the Mayer key competencies which were identified in 1991 by a committee of Australia's Education and Training Ministers and 30 people drawn from the different sectors of education and training, business, unions and higher education.

lead to appropriate action. The grade diverts attention from fundamental judgements and the criteria for making them. It is in this way that a grade may actually be counterproductive for formative purposes: "Students need more than summary grades if they are to develop expertise intelligently" (Sadler, 1989, p. 121).

To discover the potential of alternative forms of formative evaluation, such as student self-evaluation, the research investigated self-evaluation processes in classroom contexts using qualitative, case study methodology.

Case Study Methodology

The decision to conduct case studies, where qualitative methods were the main form of inquiry, was influenced by the intent to examine processes and values associated with student self-evaluation. Case study research was selected because it recognises the importance of context, focuses on the elucidation of values, and enables in-depth analysis of the heart of process. This type of research design also allowed for flexibility which was needed to take account of the dynamics of the process.

Classroom settings where teachers provided opportunities for students to develop self-evaluation skills were selected so that observation, examination of related documentation, and interview of those involved, could take place. The sharpening of the focus occurred as data were analysed and substantive themes were identified. The benefits, the tensions, the outcomes, from both the students' and teachers' perspectives were recorded.

The three sites shared the following common characteristics: teachers adopting a learner-centred teaching and learning approach; students provided with the opportunity to self-evaluate their learning and teaching experiences; and sites where such changes to current teaching and learning programs were being piloted. They were: Arboret High School (an Australian country secondary school); Grove Further Education (FE) college (a suburban London FE college where lecturers were piloting the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced science program[2]); and Forest High School (an inner city secondary high school in London).

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2 The Advanced GNVQ is designed to be equivalent to two General Certificate of Education (GCE) advanced (A) Levels and core skills. The qualification normally takes two academic years to complete and consists of eight mandatory units, four optional units and three units of skills: communication; application of number and information technology.

Multiple data sources were used: interviews; direct observation; documents; records and physical artefacts. Students, teachers and administrators were the main informants through unstructured interviews. Observations were made of student self-evaluative processes in action, classroom teaching practice and formal presentations by students. The examination and analysis of documents took place to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources.

For each case site focus was on common issues and use of consistent procedures in data collection. In the processes of collection, analysis and reporting of data, systematic cross checks occurred. The validity of the case studies was established by triangulation of data through the use of multiple sources of evidence, use of multiple methods of data collection and use of multiple perspectives on the student self-evaluation process.

The data base for the three case studies consisted of: transcripts of interviews of 72 students, 19 parents, 13 teachers and seven administrators. There were 127 separate documents that were analysed and these consisted of: policies, programs, teachers' lesson notes, handouts, student self-evaluations, portfolios, assignments, 'admin folders', prospectus and school development plans. The field notes were taken from 12 hours of video recorded lessons, 40 observed lessons, 15 meetings and eight professional development workshops or sessions and three parents' meetings.

Student Self-Evaluation Processes

From an analysis of the documents, the interviews of students and staff and from observations of lessons, two broad types of student self-evaluation processes were identified. The informal processes were integrated into the teaching and learning practice quickly, verbally and pragmatically. They allowed the students to collect their thoughts or feelings so that they could proceed to more formal evaluative tasks or more structured learning. The formal processes were more paper-based with a tangible outcome that was used as a referent for evaluating the student's progress. Examples of such formal evaluative tasks include the use of portfolios or reflective journals.

From an analysis of both the informal and formal types of student self-evaluation it was possible to identify a number of dimensions to the process. These dimensions were further refined from a cross-case analysis of the substantive themes of each case study. For discursive and illustrative purposes they have been depicted as a static list. This constitutes a major limitation as the interrelated and mutually reinforcing nature of these dimensions and their properties are not accurately portrayed. They are: the

use of criteria, teacher-student interactive dialogue and the ascription of a grade. In reality these dimensions of the student self-evaluation process are dynamic, complex and interrelate but for analytical reasons they have been identified as process themes and the rich, interactive, dynamic has been constrained.

1. The Use of Criteria

An analysis of the formal and informal student self-evaluation processes highlighted the need for students and teacher to discuss the criteria for evaluation so that students know what criteria to use when evaluating their own or their peers' work. Specificity and clarity were two properties which were valued by students in this process. In two case studies students were also involved in identifying criteria.

Students reported that identifying criteria for peer or self-evaluation was a valuable learning process. The negotiation of the criteria also impacted on the student-teacher relationship. The teachers' active involvement of the students in the evaluative process appeared to create relations where there was a more even distribution of power. Students' perceptions of what criteria were considered valuable in the evaluation exercise were acknowledged and included. The students' opinions were valued and this helped to maintain their self-esteem and encouraged ownership of the decisions.

In the evaluation and critique of their own, and one another's work, students indicated that they gained further ideas, an insight into their peers' thinking, and a better understanding of the evaluative process. They debated why a piece of work did, or did not, meet the specified criteria and this seemed to sharpen their thinking and helped them articulate their expectations. This process also contributed to the demystification of the teacher's tacit knowledge and their own understanding of what constituted a quality performance. In judging their own and their peers' work by the criteria identified the students developed a clearer notion of the performance standards required.

In knowing what is required and what standard is expected students have a target for which they can aim. The value of external information to nurture the self-evaluative processes was emphasised by students. By making the criteria explicit, and in some cases involving them in their identification, teachers were clarifying expectations and giving students more information than ever before in the evaluation process. A dilemma which emerged for students and teachers, was the evaluation of quality performances. Sadler (1989) has defined qualitative judgements as those made directly by people, "the source and instrument for the appraisal is the person's brain"

(p. 124). He explains that the judgement is not reducible to a formula which can be applied by a non-expert. Broadfoot (1993) quotes Sadler (1989) in acknowledging this problem:

> "the standards of performance which exist in teachers' minds can never be fully and unambiguously expressed as criteria because if they are at all complex, they are inevitably 'fuzzy'. In order to improve, students need to be given access to the 'guild' knowledge which defines the quality of the expected performance" (p.4).

Students need to engage in tasks where they also come to understand that, to evaluate complex learning outcomes, it is not always possible to specify all of the relevant criteria in advance; and that a fixed set of criteria may not be consistently applicable to different student responses to the same task.

2. The Interactive Dialogue

The second dimension of the student self-evaluation process is the interactive dialogue, which occurs between student and teacher, during the analysis of the student's self-evaluation. This dimension was fundamental to learning as it was during this interchange that students confronted the teacher, and in so doing, clarified their thinking. During peer evaluation, students also confronted one another in analysing their evaluations.

Interchange in the self-evaluation process is a two-way process that promotes clarity and understanding for both student and teacher. The teacher gains more information from the student because an insight into his or her mind is possible. The student has to demonstrate understanding by making his or her thinking explicit. This is also true when students evaluate one another's work.

This interaction and sharing of the thinking process is an important outcome of peer and self-evaluation when compared with the teacher doing the evaluation, on his or her own, and handing work back. Students indicated that interaction with the teacher was an important aspect of the self-evaluation process which caused them to be more reflective and impacted on their learning. Opportunities were created for one-to-one, teacher-student consultation. This appeared to be a supportive environment where students engaged in self-evaluation, confronted issues, considered future action and goals for learning. It was on these occasions that students also discussed, in confidence with teachers, concerns or problems they were experiencing with their work. An appropriate classroom climate was fundamental to preserve the student's self-esteem and to enable students to engage in critique of their own and their peers' work.

Feedback and negotiation are important properties of the interactive dialogue. Teachers, administrators and students, who were interviewed, highlighted the fundamental role of these properties in the learning process. The students wanted accurate feedback in the self-evaluation process, particularly for the grading system, to enable them to predict accurately their levels. To prevent trial-and-error learning students need feedback to improve the quality of their responses (Sadler, 1989). The function of feedback in the formative evaluation process was highlighted. Negotiation is an important aspect of the self-evaluation process and is carried out between the students and their teachers. It was observed during the processes of identifying criteria for evaluation, in establishing contracts for learning and in conducting peer and self-evaluation.

3. The Ascription of a Grade

The third dimension of the student self-evaluation process is the ascription of a grade, by the students, for their own work. Students indicated that they valued the insights they acquired from their engagement in this process. Wiggins (1992) suggests that involving students in the task analysis and in devising the scoring scheme builds ownership of the evaluation process. He believes that such involvement clarifies that judgements are not arbitrary and "makes it possible to hold students to higher standards because the criteria are clear and reasonable" (Wiggins, 1992, p. 30). The data analysis affirms this claim.

Some teachers provided opportunities for students to evaluate their own and their peers' work and gave them responsibility for grading the work. Students indicated that it was important to understand why they were allocated particular grades. The ascription of grades to their own and their peers' work had caused them to think about the criteria and to use these in the evaluative process. It was during this dimension of the self-evaluation process that students were developing what Sadler (1989) has described as an "indispensable condition for improvement." Students were developing a notion of the standard required similar to that of the teacher. This is fundamental for students so they can monitor continuously the quality of what is being produced during the act of production itself.

Trusting students and their ability to be perceptive about themselves and others is an integral part of the self-evaluation process for this to become a possibility pedagogical change is also required.

Conditions For Student Self-Evaluation

As intimated above a number of conditions need to be in place if student self-evaluation is to take root and flourish. These supporting factors are pedagogical change, a shared value system between students and teachers and an evaluation ethic embedded in the school as a whole.

1. Pedagogical Change

Pedagogical change was either a driving or resultant change force in the adoption of student self-evaluation processes. At Arboret and Forest, the main aim was the implementation of pedagogical change (more learner-centred approaches) which in some classrooms led to the adoption of student self-evaluation to promote increased student responsibility for learning. Independent learning, improved student achievement and morale, were values emphasised. At Grove, the implementation of student self-evaluation as a teaching and learning practice, resulted in consequent changes to the values and structure of the classroom. In their efforts to provide a high quality vocational alternative to academic qualifications, the lecturers found themselves adopting a more learner-centred pedagogy and were also valuing increased student responsibility for their learning.

In each case pedagogical change involved a shift from a didactic, teacher-directed learning environment, with the emphasis on teacher presentation of a body of knowledge and student passivity in the learning process, to 'teacher as coach' or teacher as facilitator of learning, where the emphasis was on active student engagement in the learning process. The intended student learning-outcomes included: students as independent learners and improved student achievement. This required better connection of learning outcomes with previous learning and current learning tasks, active problem solving, increased student control over the planning, organising and evaluating of the work. Students were accustomed to the teacher being in control of the planning, pacing, organising and evaluating the work and in all cases it was hard for teachers because "it meant losing control." For these teachers there was tension in the adoption of the pedagogical shift needed to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and to provide students with the opportunity to develop the skills required. Teachers had to arrange the learning environment so that students had the space and the time to try different approaches and to learn from these experiences, engage in collaborative learning and have independent access to resources. A more learner-centred approach meant that initially teachers assisted students as they assumed control of their learning. They then had to stand back to allow the students to take charge.

Changing one's teaching practice and integrating the principles of learner-centred pedagogy was not an easy process as this teacher from Arboret recognised:

> "It's a lot harder to teach students to make choices, to negotiate, to communicate confidently with each other without beating each other down or arguing with them. It's a lot harder to teach those skills to model those skills. None of us were trained that way and so it's about building a relationship" (Teacher Interview, 1993).

The importance of providing teachers with relevant, development opportunities to facilitate the risk-taking associated with the shift in the current teaching practice was identified, but not necessarily forthcoming, in each case. At no point did teachers move dramatically from traditional teaching to a more learner-centred approach. It was implemented a task at a time and not all teachers (in each case) were implementing these practices in the same way nor at the same rate.

2. Shared Value System

Discourse analysis of official documents from each case study site revealed that each shared the following underpinning sets of values: increased student responsibility for learning, improved student achievement, staff professional development (for learning what and/or how to change practice), collective problem solving and acknowledgement of student rights. In two studies (Arboret and Grove) it was also apparent that the values of collaborative organisational structure and integrated approaches to teaching and learning were being implemented.

In each case study, teachers acknowledged the importance of valuing student self-evaluation as a skill to be developed and practised. For student self-evaluation to be valid, it has to be valued by teachers and students and each must be committed to the process.

If students are to take responsibility for evaluating their own work then the relationship between teacher and students becomes crucial. Teachers and students indicated that the following qualities supported the implementation of the student self-evaluation processes: a valuing of student voices; a respect for honest opinions; trust; active student engagement in the learning process; and accurate student evaluation of their own successes and failings, areas of strength and weakness, and recognition of where and when to seek teacher help.

Relations of trust with the students stemmed from the teachers' modelling of the values and behaviours that they were demanding of their students and the establishment of a classroom culture where students experienced opportunities to develop these relations of trust and honesty with the teacher and their peers. As this teacher from Forest noted:

> "It is important for kids to trust you. I think that it is really important for them to know that you respect their judgement and you trust their honesty. I encourage kids to be honest about their work and honest about their own capabilities and praise them for it" (Teacher Interview, 1994).

Teachers could identify those students who did not take the self-evaluation exercise seriously and who were not honest with themselves. These students could not see the relevance to them personally, rather they saw self-evaluation as a task to be completed for the teacher.

A necessary condition for the implementation of student self-evaluation processes is the opportunity for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Student engagement was evident in these classroom contexts where decision-making, planning, consultation and negotiation took place between the teacher and students. Self-evaluation requires student involvement in the decision-making associated with pacing, assessment, readiness, action planning, and the setting of personal learning goals.

Students confirmed the importance of the classroom context when they referred to the numerous opportunities to demonstrate responsibility for their learning. They cited classes where they could choose how to carry out their research and work, where they researched authentic issues, read on their own and/or worked in groups. They appreciated the opportunities to make their own choices about their work and evaluation of that work.

3. Evaluation Ethic

Establishing a shared understanding of the processes of student self-evaluation and practising it across the school requires the development of an evaluation ethic. The wider school context plays a role in the establishment of such an ethic.

In each case, students' views and needs were valued and sought. Students were involved in school/college projects which aimed for greater student involvement and encouraged them to contribute their ideas and to participate in school/college decision-making. Students were given responsibility and realised that they had to

work with teachers in a cooperative way, they felt part of the organisation with a greater voice in the decision-making. They felt that the school/college was doing something important for them and taking an increased interest in them. Both at Arboret and Forest the introduction of a school council was a critical incident that furthered recognition of students' contribution to the school.

Student involvement in evaluation at the school level enabled some to develop vital core skills. 'Giving students a voice' was considered important for students, for they had to reach consensus and make the final decisions on what it was they wanted. It was expected that with student involvement in the decision-making processes they would take responsibility for the decisions they made and also for the consequences of those decisions. This was empowering for students and helped to establish their voice as one to be consulted and taken seriously.

Constraints On Student Self-Evaluation

Constraints on student self-evaluation became evident as changes, or attempts to change, classroom teaching and learning practice took place. The lack of time, the paucity of professional development and support for student self-evaluation, and the change process, itself, were all inhibiting factors.

1. Time

Time was a constraint apparent in all three cases. Changing teaching styles is a time-consuming process. It is also stressful for teachers to incorporate new teaching and learning strategies when there exist external forces and system pressure 'to cover' the set curriculum, and to improve academic results, in a given time frame. Teachers indicated that they wanted time to exchange ideas, to share and discuss similar problems and to find collaborative solutions.

Teachers felt stretched for time. In two of the cases they worked in teams which required attendance at meetings for the collaborative development of assignments and agreed approaches to teaching and learning. Where a new course was being implemented it meant teachers were learning at the same time as they were organising and delivering the program of work.

Students too wanted more time. Some required more time than others, not only to conduct the self-evaluation, but also to complete the work itself. Teachers found it difficult to find time to invest in relations with each student and their work. They found that inevitably there were some students who were neglected. These time-

related constraints were associated with the curriculum structure and/or the timetable framework.

Action planning as an outcome of the student self-evaluation process was neglected or not given enough time for proper implementation. In some cases, the follow-up did not eventuate despite teachers valuing this phase of the process. The consequence was that students perceived the process to be unimportant and not relevant to their learning and teaching experience. Implementation of these plans with appropriate follow-up was needed. Their neglect constituted another major constraint.

Pressures of external examinations or demonstrations of improved student academic performance impacted on the time allocated for self-evaluation purposes. Time was either reduced or not allocated. Quite often, despite the rhetoric of valuing the self-evaluation process, it was not a reality practised in the classrooms observed. For example, teachers in trying to give attention to new teaching strategies, new curriculum or new assessment systems, delayed student self-evaluation processes or did not give them the time to be implemented effectively. A major tension for teachers in each case was getting the time to incorporate the information from the student self-evaluations into revised programs.

2. Discrepant Approaches

Another major constraint which emerged was the lack of teacher understanding and confidence in the implementation of student self-evaluation. If it is to be a practice to be implemented successfully then not only must it be valued, it must also be understood and given status throughout the school. In all case studies some teachers did not fully understand the process and a diversity of practice was evident. Inconsistent attempts at the implementation of learner-centred pedagogy, and a lack of focus and support, compounded the situation.

Resources to provide adequate professional development and training for teachers involved in the various innovative programs appeared to be lacking. Professional development was insufficient to train teachers and to develop their confidence to introduce dramatic change to their teaching and learning programs. Guidance and support for such major pedagogical change was needed. In all cases, a key area of neglect (given its importance in the self-evaluation process) was how to interview students, how to question, how to give feedback, how to answer questions, address problems and handle issues of confidentiality

Teacher training is necessary so that teachers are confident in evaluative processes, can utilise them with their students and integrate them into their teaching practice. A teacher from Forest School commented;

> "I don't think there has been enough standardisation in what kids are asked to reflect upon. I think that it has to be very clear. The kids have to know why they are doing it, and what they are supposed to be commenting on. They have to have access to their own work and their own files and be given the time to discuss it with other kids" (Teacher Interview, 1994).

Evaluation was interpreted in a rather limited way by teachers when checklists were produced for students to complete by ticking boxes. Student self-evaluation is a process intended to demonstrate that students are capable of reflecting on their own work and judging its worth. This proved difficult for students when there was no training in evaluation processes or no discussion of how to identify criteria for evaluation.

Some teachers did not think that students learnt much from self-evaluation because the students were not skilled in the processes. Students need to know what self-evaluation involves and how self-evaluation connects to learning. Students' lack of understanding of the processes constituted a major constraint. For example in one case, students referred to self-evaluation as an exercise carried out at the end of term. It was fulfilling a formal, summative function and students had a range of audiences to consider. It was not intended to be solely for self-improvement purposes of a formative nature. Due to these tensions self-evaluation was reduced to a banal and superficial understanding.

3. The Change Process

Teachers in the three case studies had to cope with pedagogical change together with curriculum and evaluation changes. In implementing these changes teachers were learning on demand. They found changing their teaching styles difficult, while students were reluctant to take charge of their own learning. It was a challenge for teachers to share their power with the students, to give them the freedom to choose topics, ways of researching, learning, methods of demonstrating their learning and to hand over more responsibility to them.

The implementation of student self-evaluation caused teachers to not only change their teaching practice but also the classroom culture so that students were no longer dependent on them for judgements about the quality of their performance. This required sharing their rationales for the change in teaching practice and the shift in

evaluation processes. However, this was not made explicit in all cases. The tension for students came with having to take control of their learning. Teachers stressed that it was hard for some students "... because they want *you* to take control." Students' expectations also had to change. Teachers had to make standards and the criteria that were to be used in the evaluation process explicit and then had to provide opportunities for students to learn the skills of evaluation and critique.

The learner-centred approach challenged students. Teachers found the shift for students along the continuum (so that they were assuming greater responsibility for their learning) proved to be difficult for them. Some expected to be teacher-led and preferred the more directed learning approach. For example, a teacher commented:

> "...that often students wish to be teacher led, rather than control their own destinies. If one operates to build self-reliance, one is more confident about setting the students up to organise themselves. In the end it makes the whole process of learning 'easier' for the students" (Teacher Interview, 1994).

When teaching in such a context, where independent learning is a formal learning outcome, a major dilemma for teachers is deciding exactly how much guidance and support to give their students. A teacher described this further:

> "I think that the tension also comes on the staff side (when first having to deliver a curriculum to the GNVQ model), if you are unprepared for the type of approach. You need to be able to step back from the students a little, giving them the option to make mistakes as much as anything else" (Teacher Interview, 1994).

A 'feeling of no control' emerged from this change in teaching practice and was accompanied with anxiety and stress. This was true particularly for those teachers who had always taught in a particular way to achieve a known outcome. The teachers who were changing indicated that they had to have faith in the process and needed to find a comfort with such change.

In encouraging students to take greater responsibility for their learning, and for self-evaluation, teachers need to be aware of student reticence. Students are not always confident to ask for help, particularly in contexts where independent learning is valued. When interviewed some students expressed their reluctance to ask teachers for assistance. Some students were stressed by the changes and feared that their grades might fall as a consequence of the new approaches or pilot programs adopted. There was apparent student frustration with different teaching styles and strategies, for not all teachers implemented student self-evaluation or learner-centred pedagogy,

in the same way or at the same rate. Some students indicated that they found the increased responsibility for their learning stressful and had difficulty adapting to the change in teaching style.

Learning Outcomes

In each case study the intended learning outcomes for students, as identified by an analysis of the documentation collected from each site, included: student independence in their learning, responsibility for decision making related to assignments, proactivitiy, and creativity in taking charge of their own work. Student self-evaluation appeared to be a process of supporting the achievement of these. Other developments which appeared to emanate from the student self-evaluation process included increased student motivation, engagement in their learning, critique and consequent improvement of the work.

The processes of self-evaluation were seen as educative by students, teachers and parents. Teachers noted that "the students believe that they have never worked harder: the challenge." Students too felt they were taking greater responsibility for their learning and acknowledged it was not easy. For example:

> "[this approach] makes you think more about: planning what you're doing first, and actually how to look for the information, and what you have to look for. ...before you just did it! Finished the assignment and handed it in. It was just the assignment that counted. You didn't really look at what you needed, to get the grades. ... it's a lot easier to just hand the assignment over and say: 'what do I get?'" (Student Interview, 1994).

Students, parents and teachers indicated that student self-evaluation was motivational, enhanced morale and interest. From the students' view self-evaluation impacted on self-esteem. For example:

> "Self-evaluation teaches you like your own self-worth, some people don't have much confidence in themselves, but when they come to action planning [Record of Achievement] they realise that they have achieved something ... It makes you feel ... that you've done well ...It's teaching you self-worth I think" (Student Interview, 1994).

From the teachers' point of view self-evaluation was one way of increasing self-esteem and building confidence to succeed because it encouraged students to realise what was achieved as well as what was not. In the two cases where students were involved in the identification of criteria for evaluation teachers indicated that they

were able to monitor the extent to which students successfully adopted and implemented the practice of self-evaluation.

The development of skills in students to be self-critical and self-reliant was promoted by self-evaluation processes according to some of the teachers interviewed. Students seemed to be integrating the criteria for successful performance through the use of the more formal types of self-evaluation. When they reflected on their mistakes students found cause to replan and/or rethink their use of time and learning strategies. It was apparent that student self-evaluation provoked some metacognitive thinking. This supports Gipps' (1994) claim that "[a]ccess to metacognitive processes for pupils can come from a process of guided or negotiated self-assessment, in which the pupil gains awareness of his/her own learning strategies and efficiency" (p. 28). When the students were required to identify areas for improvement, and action to be taken, they were not just thinking about what they had learnt but how they were learning. Some students were also thinking about the efficiency of their learning strategies. In thinking about how they learn, students had a better understanding of how, and when, they worked well.

Students appeared to be developing core skills for life long learning and problem solving. In using self-evaluation they discovered their need to manage time more efficiently and effectively, to develop skills in research, information seeking and handling, and action planning. In some cases students set themselves personal goals, made action plans to achieve them and then self-evaluated their progress.

Consideration of their own performance and the teacher's advice, increased student awareness of what to focus on, and what to do, to improve on past performance. Some students were, in this way, integrating teachers' feedback. As a consequence of conducting self-evaluation some gained more confidence to seek assistance when needed, greater responsibility for discovering resources and for independent use of facilities. Teachers noted an increase in student competence and control over their own learning. Students too identified increased confidence with themselves and their learning. For example:

> "... it gives you a lot of confidence. It's given me a lot of confidence. How much I've done, and achieved, and how well I could do if I set myself higher standards" (Student Interview, 1994).

Involvement of students in identifying their own areas for improvement was an important outcome from the teachers' point of view. Student strengths and

weaknesses were highlighted as a consequence of the process and students were then encouraged to think about action to be taken:

> "I think that we learn where we've gone wrong and how to improve ourselves to do better and the way to go about the next assignment. You learn from your mistakes" (Student Interview, 1994).

Improved student-teacher relations was a further outcome discovered. For example, the tutors for Personal and Social Education at Forest and the teacher-mentors for students at Grove were more aware of individual student problems and weaknesses because of student self-evaluation. Some students felt they could talk frankly to their teachers, tutors or mentors about their own failings and weaknesses.

Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed some of the findings of the research conducted on student self-evaluation processes in learner-centred contexts. Despite the constraints mentioned, where student self-evaluation was implemented and supported by some semblance of the favourable conditions discussed, it was possible to see an empowering impact on students. These outcomes and potentialities of the student self-evaluation process include students more actively engaged in their learning, in some cases developing skills in self-critique and in metacognition. Given the supportive conditions it is also possible for students to develop increased competence, motivation, confidence and control over their learning.

It was extremely difficult for these potentialities of self-evaluation to be realised as they were being implemented, in the majority of cases, in contexts that were antithetical. For example, internationally the nineties have witnessed demands for comparable measures of scholastic achievement that are treated as "the criterion of a successful school system, a hurtful invention become bureaucratic reality" (Stake & Kerr, 1994, p. 3). League tables, school inspections and pressures for performance indicators have emerged. At the same time, there has been an increasing demand for students to develop higher order thinking skills, for them to learn to use their minds well, and for them to be able to use what they have learned outside school settings, such as in the resolution of complex problems that they will encounter as citizens, members of family and of the workforce. The major dilemma as articulated by Gipps (1994) is that at the same time as these demands are being made:

> "... our understanding of cognition and learning is telling us that we need assessment to map more directly on the processes we wish to develop, including higher order thinking skills, which makes achieving such comparability more difficult" (p. 12).

In the British context Lofty (1993) notes that what many teachers had feared is coming to pass. That is:

> "... a test-driven curriculum without significant attention to teachers' assessments of student progress through portfolios, presentations, or authentic tasks. Many teachers believe that students themselves need to take an active part in setting, monitoring and internalising standards. The increasing pressure for national testing of student performance, however, has removed them from self-evaluation and negotiating grades, and it has reduced the incentives for group work and collaborative learning" (Lofty, 1993, p. 53).

The outcomes of this research would support these contentions. Yet at the same time these fledgling findings indicate the impact of student self-evaluation processes on teaching and learning and the potential of an alternative form of formative evaluation. Given the international trend of 'hurtful inventions becom[ing] bureaucratic reality', if teachers are to help students develop the skills needed to succeed then as Gipps (1994) states:

> "[w]e must develop and propagate a wider understanding of the effect of assessment on teaching and learning for assessment does not stand outside teaching and learning but stands in dynamic interaction with it. We need also to foster a system which supports multiple methods of assessment while at the same time making sure that each one is used appropriately."

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